

This Week in Congress

May 5, 2008

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Working to Protect Kansas Farmers and Ranchers

Before I came back to Washington, D.C., this week, I stopped in Ellsworth to visit with a few farmers and ranchers about the farm bill. I visited John Thaemert, past President of the National Association of Wheat Growers and stopped at Ellsworth County Co-op, Citizens State Bank and the pharmacy. These discussions were beneficial in preparing for the farm bill meeting that took place later in the week.

As a member of the Farm Bill Conference Committee, I participated in a meeting that began Thursday night and ended early Friday morning. While progress was made, I was disappointed that some Representatives and Senators failed to support a series of amendments that would have helped restore the safety net that has been damaged by negotiations that occurred in closed door meetings. These meetings failed to produce a bill that will respond to the risks faced by farmers and ranchers.

Senator Pat Roberts and I offered amendments during Thursday night's meeting to restore cuts made to direct payments, both of which failed on party line votes. We also supported an amendment that would have restored cuts to crop insurance, but it also failed on a party line vote.

Meetings next week should bring the conference to a close and a bill to the House and Senate floor. President Bush has been unclear in his intentions of signing or vetoing the farm bill. You may [click here](#) to watch a video of the conference committee meeting and [click here](#) to view photos.

Joining Citizens of Greensburg for One Year Anniversary Activities

On Saturday, I joined the citizens of Greensburg to celebrate the community's progress in recovering from the devastation of the May 4, 2007, tornado. There are also several other communities that were affected by storms that same weekend one year ago. It is good to see Kansans in areas around Macksville, Claflin and Ottawa County also moving forward after the damage from the storms.

An important sign of the recovery in Greensburg is the reopening of the Care and Share Thrift Store. It was an honor to participate in the grand opening and inspiring to know that the first business returning to Main Street is providing an important service to those in need. Thank you to pastors Marvin George, Terry Mayhew and the entire Greensburg Ministerial Alliance. The alliance and the Care and Share board of directors deserve congratulations for further restoring faith and hope to their community.

To stimulate additional growth and reconstruction, the U.S. Economic Development Administration approved \$2.3 million to rebuild Main Street infrastructure. It is estimated that this funding will create 30 jobs and leverage approximately \$3 million in private investment. I was pleased to take part in this funding announcement, which ensures that the Care and Share Thrift Store is only the first business to return to Greensburg's Main Street.

I was also able to tour the 5-4-7 Arts Center with Chris Ballard. It was a pleasure to meet Professor Dan Rockhill and his Studio 804 students from the University of Kansas School of Architecture and Urban Planning. For the last 18 weeks, the students have been designing and constructing the arts center in an environmentally sustainable manner. Thank you to Dr. Rockhill and his talented group of students for donating their time and resources to bringing the arts back to Greensburg.

President Bush also returned to Greensburg this weekend to give remarks during the Greensburg High School graduation on Sunday. The citizens of Greensburg and their neighbors are an inspiration to me and people all across the state and nation. The scope of their accomplishments is amazing given the devastation they suffered just one year ago. Although challenges remain, there is no doubt that Greensburg is on its way to once again becoming a place to call home. [Click here](#) to view photos from the weekend and read more about Greensburg a year after the tornado.

Remembering the Holocaust

It was an honor to participate in the National Commemoration of the Days of Remembrance put on by the Holocaust Memorial Museum this week. Congress established the Days of Remembrance as our nation's annual memorial of the victims of the Holocaust. This year, I observed their memory by attending a service honoring their lives and also those of our service men and women who liberated them from the concentration camps. At the service, I had the privilege of lighting a memorial candle with Susan Taube, a Holocaust survivor. During the Holocaust, Ms. Taube was deported from her homeland of Germany to a ghetto and several concentration camps before being liberated in 1945.

Along with stories like that of Ms. Taube, those in attendance heard passionate pleas for the world to keep its word when it said "never again"; to the sort of mass killing that happened under the Nazis. Last year, I had the opportunity to visit Darfur, Sudan, where a similar type of government organized attack on its people is taking place. [Click here](#) if you would like to read an op-ed I wrote on the situation. Photos from the memorial service can

viewed by

[clicking here](#)

. You can learn more about the Holocaust Memorial Museum's effort to make sure the Holocaust is never forgotten and not allowed to be repeated in Darfur by visiting its Remembrance site at

<http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor/>

and Conscience site at

<http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/>

Welcoming Kansas World War II Veterans to Our Nation's Capital

This week, I welcomed another group of Kansas World War II veterans to our nation's capital during their visit to the World War II Memorial created in their honor. I enjoy seeing our veterans in Washington, D.C., and having the opportunity to personally thank them for their sacrifices that we as a country still benefit from. I appreciate the efforts of the Honor Flight program and Bill Patterson of Lyndon for organizing this trip for these Kansas heroes. There were 37 veterans from the eastern half of the state and 13 students from Lyndon High School assisting them during the trip. [Click here](#) to view photos from the visit.

Participating in National Day of Prayer Event

On Thursday, I joined people of all faiths across the country in observing the National Day of Prayer. Since 1952, Americans from different religious backgrounds have come together on the first Thursday of May to pray for the wellbeing of the United States and those in leadership roles. I marked this year's holiday by attending a prayer and worship service in our nation's capital.

Whether in times of uncertainty, grief or joy, prayer has the power to comfort. Prayer has strengthened me many times as I have sought guidance as an elected official. The prayer service brought Members of Congress from both parties together for a time of reverence and reflection.

Speaking to Farm Broadcasters

I spoke to the National Association of Farm Broadcasters while they were in our nation's capital this week for the organization's annual Washington Watch. It was good to see regional and Kansas broadcasters Greg Akagi of WIBW Radio in Topeka, John Jenkinson of Golden Plains Agriculture Network in Lakin and Tom Brand of Eagle Communications in St. Joe, Missouri. Earlier in the week, Senator Pat Roberts and I joined up to provide an update to Kansas media about the farm bill. [Click here](#) to listen to our news teleconference.

Visiting Soldiers at Irwin Army Community Hospital at Fort Riley

On Monday, I visited Fort Riley to visit with the leadership of Irwin Army Community Hospital and the Warrior Transition Battalion. While there, I toured the Soldier and Family Assistance Center and met with several soldiers who are currently recovering from injuries.

I wanted to see how things are going at Fort Riley and see the growth since my last visit in September. When I last visited, Fort Riley was serving 75 soldiers in the Warrior Transition Unit. There are now more than 400. Construction on a new complex that will house 200 barrack rooms for the Warrior Unit is scheduled to begin this year.

Thanks to Commanding General Robert Durbin, Colonel Lee Meritt and Colonel Dawn Smith for their time visiting with me and showing me around the facilities. The good work and attention to care by this leadership team and others at Fort Riley is evident when visiting with soldiers and touring the facilities.

Attending Salina Rotary and Visiting Tony's Pizza in Salina

I visited the Tony's Pizza plant in Salina this week to learn more about the company and the products they make. Schwan Food Company makes Tony's Pizza and the Salina plant employs around 1,700 Kansans. Last year, the plant used more than 138 million pounds of flour and 92 million pounds of cheese. Thanks to Al Schwan for the tour.

Before visiting Tony's Pizza, I attended the Salina Rotary Club noon meeting where Mike Hoppock and North McCarther presented the program. Thanks to Wendell Nickel for hosting me.

Speaking at MidAmerica Nazarene University Commencement

On Sunday, I spoke at the commencement ceremony for the 2008 graduating class of MidAmerica Nazarene College in Olathe. I wish all 217 graduating seniors much continued success and happiness. Thanks to President Edwin Robinson and Reverend Dwight Douglas for the invitation to speak.

In the Office

Dave Fish, Debbie Gann, Steve Radke, John Frederick, Don McGinty and Scott Schneider of Wichita were in with the Kansas aviation industry to discuss the Air Force Tanker decision and update me on Boeing's efforts to challenge the contract. The contract's value is well over \$35 billion and would provide numerous employment opportunities for Kansans and other Americans. I think the decision made by the Air Force was flawed and I have joined the Kansas delegation in asking for the contract to be suspended until a review is conducted by the Air Force.

Tim Browder and Corey Peterson of Topeka and Bev Sauerwein of Wichita were in with the Kansas Contractors Association to encourage investment in our nation's aging infrastructure. Gregg Lewis of Osawatomie, Dan Copu of Hope, Marilyn and Paul Boeding of Seneca, Michael Johnson of Courtland, Dale Bradley of Miltonvale, Joe Kennedy of Frankfort, Steve Handke of Everest and Shari Weber of Topeka were in with the Community Bankers Association to discuss legislation that would provide regulatory relief for Kansas banks. Randy Hardy of Salina was in with the American Rental Association to share the challenges rental businesses face with health insurance costs, immigration policies and the estate tax.

Bob Page, President and CEO of the University of Kansas Hospital, was in along with Kari Bruffett of Kansas City to discuss the importance of a Medicaid drug discount program, stopping Medicare physician cuts and the importance of funding graduate medical education. Ward Loyd of Garden City and Don Chronister of Topeka were in with Juvenile Justice Authority to share their thoughts about the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. Members of the American Heart Association were in to talk about increased physical fitness education for children and legislation to promote stroke and heart disease research and prevention. Among the group were Sherry Kriegshauser of Alma, Linda DeCoursey and Hasob Swedlund of Topeka, Melody Saxton of Junction City and Kevin Walker of Olathe.

Scott Heidner of Topeka was in with the American Council of Engineering Companies to discuss legislation that would increase the number of H1-B visas available in the U.S. each year. Members of the Topeka Independent Living Resource Center were in to discuss the importance of the Community Choice Act, which helps people with disabilities live in their homes. The group included Dallas and Pat Hathaway, Paul and Jeremiah O'Dell, Christy King, Kevin Siek and Sharon Joseph of Topeka; Larry Burnett, Larry Burnett Jr. and Latonia Burnett of Hutchinson; Toni and Ashley Martin of Emporia; Dick Hosty, Abby Phillips, Colin Olenik and Ben Petrus of Overland Park; Dorothy Standridge, Daryl Lentz, Laura Austin, Marva Meats and Jimmy Orman of Wichita; Mike Oxford of Lonestar; and Cicil Walker of El Dorado.

Mark Augustine and Trace Walker of Salina and Sean Williams of Ottawa were in with the North American Transportation Services Association to discuss high fuel prices and the upcoming highway reauthorization bill. Garth Strand of Hutchinson was in with the Hutchinson Credit Union to share his thoughts about legislation that would affect how credit unions operate. Members of the Kansas Building Industry Association were in to discuss the current housing situation in Kansas and emphasize the importance of Congress passing a comprehensive housing reform and stimulus package. The group included Leon Greaser, Don Klausmeyer, Mark McKenna, Wess Gaylon, Tom Baalman Jr., Tim Shigley and Tony Zimbelman of Wichita, Dustin Hawks and Gary Pashman of Topeka, Farrol Brown of Pretty Prairie and Richard Standrich of Derby.

Carrie Newdigger of Macksville and her husband, Glenn, were in to talk with me about Carrie's 2007 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Carrie is a science teacher at Macksville High School. The couple spent the week in Washington, D.C., and took a tour of the U.S. Capitol building.

Several other Kansans stopped by my Washington, D.C., office to take a tour of the United States Capitol building. Robert and Judy Parsons of Hugoton, Jason and William King of

Ulysses, Don and Karen Montgomery of Burlingame and Walter and JoAnn Murray of Atchison took a tour. Also in for a tour were Mary Glanville of Topeka, Andrew Sramek of McDonald, Nadine Sigle of Osborne, Shawna Mitchell of McPherson and Michael Vogt of Marysville. In from Manhattan were Margaret Phillips, James Lindquist and Daryl and Joyce Buchholz.

Very truly yours,

Jerry